

USAR_J-12_Takenouchi

English

11:14:34:01 Thank you for coming today

11:14:36:06 Thank you for inviting me

11:14:43:18 Please tell us your name

11:14:45:08 My name is Midori Takenouchi

11:15:04:22 Please tell us your date of birth

11:15:06:09 March 31st 1933. I will be 77 years old this year

11:15:18:18 Where were you born and raised?

11:15:22:03 I was born in Suginami, Tokyo

11:15:28:23 How long have you lived in Suginami, Tokyo?

11:15:31:10 I lived there until I graduated elementary school.

11:15:55:18 You told us that you went to elementary school in Suginami. How was the school like, and what did you do for fun?

11:16:05:04 Something for fun... Before 1941, before the war start, I had very ordinary childhood. Textbooks and all the other started to change from December 8th, when the World War 2 started.

11:16:32:15 There were not much of goods or resources so I played with otedama(beanbag) and jump ropes. I did jump ropes in playground.

11:16:47:20 Is that before or after the war?

11:16:50:11 That was... I was in Nagano after the war so when I was in Tokyo, my father was still with us. Can I talk about my dad?

11:17:04:10 My father was drafted for "Matsumoto Gojyu rentai"(Matsumoto 50th regiment) in Showa 16th(1941)

11:17:21:03 He went to Matsumoto, Nagano because the headquarter was in Nagano. He joined the military unit there.

11:17:36:06 The war has not started yet at that time. It started 5 months after.

11:17:51:18 Our living did not become so miserable after he left. That is my memory in 3rd grade.

11:18:15:15 So, did the school changed after the attack on Pearl Harbor?

11:18:18:21 The textbooks had changed.

11:18:21:04 How so?

11:18:22:12 First of all, the appellation of elementary school had

changed. Right now, we call them "shou gakkou." Back then, we called them "shou gakkou," but it changed to "kokumin gakkou" from Showa 16th (1941).

11:18:36:23 And teachers taught us that the Japan is fighting in right and fair way. They also taught that the Japan is "kaminokuni (the nation ruled by holy emperor)" so Japan is always doing right things to do. They kept the 'unannounced attack' part vague.

11:18:52:09 Because we were ruled by holy emperor, Japan will never do anything wrong and the Japan will win the war; that is what we learned in school. The textbook had other school materials had many war related items. For example, songs we sang and musics we played had mentioned how we need to be supportive for our nation along with troops at the battlefield. The war influenced the "undoukai (athletic meet)" as well. We pretended that we are nurse and carried pretended injured troops on a stretcher; that is how we raced. There were no longer any pretty recreations or events.

11:19:52:12 Had the school uniform changed?

11:19:55:07 The luxury was our enemy... by the way, we were in elementary school so we did not have a school uniform. There were less clothing. We could not easily purchase them. We had to have "iryokippu(clothing ticket)" in order to purchase clothing. Clothing choices were very limited as well. There were less materials such as pure-wool and pure-cotton so we put up with substitute.

11:20:31:14 The substitute was rayon and staple-fiber. We have better synthetic fibers now, but the quality was poor back then.

11:20:43:06 We did not have school uniforms in public elementary school. Since the luxury was our enemy, any fashionable or childlike clothing were gone.

11:21:05:13 Any change in uniforms for upper grade student?

11:21:11:13 The compulsory education was up to 6th grade but there was a jyogakkou (a girls' school) after that. The girls' school had a uniform□which is sailor blouse and monpe pants. Also I have seen students with guetres on top of their uniforms at the time of war.

11:21:42:22 Is it after the war started?

11:21:45:00 Yes, it was about Showa 18th(1943) or 19th(1944)

11:21:48:16 Did the Monpe pants come out during the war time?

11:21:50:07 Yes, everyone wore monpe pants. There was a warning alarm before an air-raid alarm. There were no radar in Japan so I was not sure how accurate they were. Anyway, we could not wear skirt to school when the warning alarm came off. Boys could not wear short shorts to school either. That was a school rule.

11:22:14:04 The parents made monpe pants out of their kimonos

because there were not enough resources. There were workshops within the "tonarigumi" (neighborhood association) to teach how to make functional monpe pants.

11:22:58:01 The uniforms changed dramatically. Was it after the attack on Pearl Harbor?

11:23:04:23 After the attack.

11:23:05:06 Did you think the life changed because of the attack? Were you able to accept the situation?

11:23:14:21 We were all brainwashed, even children were. Can I talk about a school excursion?

11:23:29:20 The school excursion were not available from Showa 18th(1943)

11:23:40:06 Students in Tokyo used to go to Kansai region(west of Japan) for school excursion before the war.

11:23:45:08 However, we were out of coal for steam locomotives. Also the excursion was part of the luxury. Instead, we went to war related places such as the cavalry regiment in Nagano, and the airport in Tachikawa. When we went to the airport, we get to see the pilot training.

11:24:39:10 Was it from Showa 18th(1943)?

11:24:41:15 Yes, around Showa 17th(1942). In Showa 17th, we went to Yokohama for very first time. We were surprised by huge German ship at the Yokohama port. We could not tell what nationality they were, so we made them angry by saying Americans. The foreign people and the huge ship were new for us.

11:25:08:05 Was it Showa 17th(1942)?

11:25:09:04 It was Showa 17th.

11:25:10:03 Is it ships from foreign country?

11:25:11:07 Yes, it was German ship. It was huge ship.

11:25:15:06 Were they at the war?

11:25:15:18 They were at the war.

11:25:18:19 So did the German people came to support Japan?

11:25:20:09 It was not to support us. I think it was just a cargo ship. The huge ship was in port. The huge foreign ship left striking impression on me.

11:25:36:11 We were explained that back then, Yokohama was called Yokohama-mura(Yokohama village) and it was a fishing village.

11:26:04:19 So the school excursion for sightseeing changed to

excursion for war related places, such as army.

11:26:10:16 That is right.

11:26:11:15 How did you think about the war by seeing those foreign ships and the war related things.

11:26:21:18 In Showa 17th(1942), we thought that the war was something that is happening beyond the sea. But in April of Showa 17th(1942), Tokyo got an air-raid. That is memory from 4th grade. We had no idea that we would ever get an air-raid and so on.

11:27:00:11 Since the troops were fighting hard for the country, we needed to be supportive under the slogan of "hoshigarimasen katsumadewa (we will not covet until the victory)" There were 4, 5 people in a class who had their father or brothers went to the war. My father went to the war as well. So each class sent letters and "imon-bukuro"(consolation bag) to those family members who went to the war.

11:27:39:20 This is little weird to say, but we did not know what the war is, or we had never told the truth about the war.

11:27:59:16 So your father went to the war...

11:28:01:09 Yes

11:28:01:18 Is that in Showa 17th(1942)?

11:28:08:21 It was in Showa 16th. It was in 1941.

11:28:12:08 Where did your father go?

11:28:14:08 He went to New Guinea. He could not come back alive though.□

11:28:21:15 Where was your father before he went to New Guinea?

11:28:26:22 He was in Manchuria. He was taken to Manchuria 1 month after he joined the military unit in Matsumoto. We was in Manchuria for about 2 years.

11:28:44:11 He could not write the truth in the letters that he sent to us because there was strict inspection. He could only write things like take care of yourself, study hard, or help your mother. My mother kept all of the letters, she did not lose them at the time of the air-raid. I still have all of them.

11:29:24:10 I was proud of my father being in the military unit. Our family had a store for "Kyo-zome" (Kyoto style dye) and the business were not so great because "the luxury was our enemy" at that time. However we had some tailor jobs since the "wafuku"(Japanese clothes} were still indispensable at that time.

11:29:54:02 This is story about myself so it may not be so helpful...

11:30:05:11 People at the military unit had a day off every month and my father mailed some letters from mailbox outside of the

military base. In those letters, he wrote the truth. He mailed letter under the false name with Manchurian postage. I have some letters that were mailed from outside of the military base which did not go through the strict inspection. Those letters showed the truth.

11:30:43:23 It showed how he cared about his family. It was like the letter Mr. Hotsumi Ozaki wrote to his family. Mr. Hotsumi Ozaki is known for the famous spy Richard Sorge and published collection of letters, "Love is like a Shower of Stars"(Aijyowa furu hoshi no gotoku). His crude style of writing resembled my fathers letters. He questioned himself why he needed to be at the war.

11:31:26:20 What kind of real feelings did he expressed in his letter?

11:31:33:19 He was still 30, so he wrote that he wanted to hail his wife again, or, he wanted to drink a cup of tea, which his wife brewed in a morning. Also, since my mother had set out a "kagezen"(a meal for absent person praying for his safe return) from the 1st year. She prayed for my father not to get starved as well as his safe return. But my father wrote on his letter not to set out a "kagezen" because he promised he would return alive. He promised that he would return alive and he would ask for a cup of a tea that his wife brewed. That was about it.

11:32:21:04 Also he questioned about the meaning of being at the war. My father was not a professional soldier, but he was drafted because he had passed the soldier test and he was put on the military list. So he questioned himself why he had to be there. He also wrote that he had shortened his life for 10 years. He would had been in a big trouble if a superior officer found out what he wrote in his letter, but he did write his true feeling.

11:32:58:10 Joined in July of Showa 19th (1944), when 35 years old. Found that out in February of Showa 21st(1946).

11:33:35:19 How did you hear about the attack on Pearl Harbor in Showa 16th(1941)?

11:33:44:04 I heard it on the radio. It was on a news flash and the warship march started playing. I was busy preparing for school while the news came out. The radio announced that the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy had entered a state of war with American and English troops.

11:34:21:18 I had listened to an imperial rescript after the news but I did not understand what it said.

11:34:31:09 Everyone was grateful for the decision the emperor made. The teachers taught us that the Japan is "kaminokuni(nation ruled under holy emperor)" so we must be the respectable "syokokumin"(rising generation)

11:34:49:19 How old were you when the attack on Pearl Harbor

happened, and which school did you go to?

11:34:56:19 The name of the school is Takaido daiyon kokumin-gakkou. It is still in Suginami.

11:35:01:14 6th grade?

11:35:05:06 I was in 3rd grade when the war started.

11:35:12:07 9 or 8... I was in 3rd grade so 8 years old.

11:35:30:14 How did you feel when you heard the news flash.

11:35:33:13 I did not understand. It just announced that they made a surprise attack and we have won the war. I think the radio announced it was a day off in America and Japan made a surprise attack. We just only heard the announce of the victory and it uplifted our war spirit.

11:36:08:14 I only heard the result. They said something about sunken American battle ship or capture of something, but I did not understand them. I was only a 3rd grader and the words they used were too difficult for me. They talked about the news all day long.

11:36:28:17 Not everyone had radio at home. We were doing business at home so we had a radio in an early stage. Many of the classmates did not have radio. That is the way we were back then.

11:37:04:06 How did your parents feel about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

11:37:13:02 I am not quite sure, but I think they were worried about what would happen next. They were adult so they were suspicious about how the Japan is fighting the war.

11:37:43:03 We all thought that the soldiers would take care of the war, but my parents worried about my father being drafted to be a soldier when he pass the soldier test and be in the military list.

11:37:59:10 My mistake, my father was not with us that time. He was in Manchuria.

11:38:18:06 How did you think about America?

11:38:21:14 I thought the country was rich and gorgeous.

11:38:33:02 It is a big country, but we were taught that the Japan is the strongest and always right.

11:38:48:03 So my impression about America was big and gorgeous.

11:38:54:21 And I have heard that there were so many cars in America.

11:38:58:06 How did you get those information?

11:39:00:17 The information stopped coming in from certain time, so I think I got the information from a picture book.

11:39:11:06 This might go off the subject, but the American system such as democracy came in to Japan after the war. And I was

surprised by highways because I could not believe that there were roads that only cars are allowed and people would be punished if they walk on them. Also I had heard a story about a vending machine. I was amazed how we could buy a ticket without any workers.

11:39:46:12 Is that after the war?

11:39:47:06 It was right after the war ended, no more than 6 months passed. One more thing, educational system. All of the boys were only taught that they have to become a soldier and protect their own country.

11:40:09:18 There were pressure for us to be a respectable rising generation.

11:40:15:17 We were not allowed to play like normal children would play. For example, children at a vegetable store needed to help their mother pushing a cart with vegetables. Their father went out for the war so they had to help their mother. They were seen as praiseworthy only if they support their parents.

11:40:34:09 I had experienced that when I evacuated to rural regions during the war. It was awful. Children from urban places knew how to play and have fun, but the children from rural regions did not. They told me that I can not get fed if I do not work. I would not forget how the post war democracy made better childhood.

11:41:00:13 I was told that in America, children's job is to go out to play. I thought the America was the best place to live.

11:41:33:10 Can you tell us about your experience of the bombing of Tokyo by US army?

11:41:41:16 I did not get direct impact because Sugunami was located far from Koto. Sugunami was at the far left of the "twenty-three wards" in Tokyo.

11:41:58:01 In the morning of March 8th, Showa 20th(1945), I got back home from evacuation to see my mother. I had evacuated to Miyagi and it had been 6 months when I returned home. I was sleeping peacefully knowing my mother was next to me.

11:42:14:00 But the following night, I was awakened by uncanny noise and was told to go inside the air-raid shelter. East side of the sky was all red and I could hear the bombing sound of B-29. I was trembling with fear. Sugunami is 20, 30km away from Koto, but I could still hear them.

11:42:44:09 It was scary.

11:42:53:14 The nation did not do anything for us. They just pass out the free ticket to go on a train for the victims from the disaster. Tokyo did not give us anything else. Every part of Japan was like that. Sugunami areas remained safe compared to other places, so people escaped to Sugunami from areas where it got direct hit. Some people had their eyelashes burnt and even babies were wearing

ragged torn down clothes.

11:43:31:01 We wanted to help them but we could only give them water. We also give out soy sauce flavored rice balls with last rationed rice. The rice balls were so delicious. I remember doing that with "tonarigumi(neighborhood association).

11:43:49:22 One more thing. Many people had evacuated to rural regions so there were vacant house everywhere. Survived people sheltered themselves there, but the house were empty.

11:44:05:02 Moreover, the weather was still cold in March.

11:44:10:14 We were about to evacuate from there, so we gave many items to survived people.

11:44:33:00 How do you feel about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

11:44:41:22 I do not know. We were all brainwashed that Japan is always right, so there was no other thing to believe.

11:44:57:20 Also, we believed that the Japan is "Kaminokuni"(nation ruled by holy emperor) so it was always right, and Amaterasu-omikami(sun goddess) was watching us from the sky and would blow away all of the US planes with a "kamikaze"(divine wind) eventually.

11:45:18:17 However, when I saw a cruel sight of survived people from bombing of Tokyo, I wondered what Amaterasu-omikami was doing. It is amazing how they brainwashed us these things back then.

11:45:43:05 I do not remember how I felt at that time, but I kept believing that Japan was doing everything right.

11:45:51:12 During that time, Japan started to invade countries in Asia. On February 15th, Showa 17th(1942), Japan invaded Singapore. To celebrate the victory, they distributed some "gomumari"(rubber ball). Japanese children liked them. We had nothing at that time so we were very excited to get them. I won the raffle so I remember this very well.

11:46:26:00 The teacher told us that Singapore had changed the name to "Shonanto" and the gomumari was from soldiers who fought against Singapore. That was what the teacher told us and we believed that without any question.

11:46:40:10 I remember this very well because I won the raffle. There was no toys back then, so this gomumari made us so happy. This event made us reassure that Japan was strong and would win any battles.

11:47:10:12 When you look back your war experience, how do you feel about it?

11:47:20:07 It is very complicated. Many people say "if the war never happened...", but I think Japan learned a lot from fighting with America. We learned Democracy and we learned how to live humane life.

11:47:44:07 For example, the 4 rights of consumers by President

Kennedy; Japan had nothing similar to that. Also the individual rights. Japan had done unannounced attack; I do not know why they did this; and other inhumane things, but we have gotten the rights, freedom and Democracy. Children in modern days are normal to have the Children's Charter "Jido-kensyo", but we did not have this back then.

11:48:32:14 I think the Children's Charter was adapted in Showa 30th(1955) in Japan, but America had it more than 30 years before. They were protecting the children with law. Japan did not have such thing.

11:48:53:13 At the time I started the elementary school, all of the Cabinet members were serviceman, such as military general and naval admiral.

11:49:06:10 So if the Cabinet members kept the same with serviceman, I wonder what would have happened.

11:49:19:02 People vote for the candidate, and even women can take part in a Cabinet. I was so happy when I hear about the women's participation. Thanks to America.

11:49:44:23 That was all the question we had, but we still have 15 minutes so please tell us about when you were evacuating to rural regions. I believe you had a difficult experience.

11:50:03:17 I was too young to remember the incidence about the attack on Pearl Harbor. If I was 5 years older I could have remembered more.

11:50:17:19 All they teach was that Japan was at a right war. Everybody sacrificed everything for the country to win. We could not have or buy any items ourselves. Food, clothes, and everything was controlled goods.

11:50:50:01 So the bombing of Tokyo took place in March, didn't it?

11:50:52:21 Yes, March 10th.

11:50:54:02 So it happened 2 days after you returned home?

11:50:56:14 Yes, 2 days later. I returned home from evacuation, and I was happy to see my mother, but 2 days later...

11:51:05:02 You lived in Tokyo until end of March?

11:51:05:19 Yes, I was in Tokyo until the graduation ceremony.

11:51:11:02 People came from east because of the air-raid...

11:51:15:10 Yes, to Koenji area.

11:51:18:06 What was your life like after the survived people came.

11:51:24:18 In Tokyo?

11:51:25:18 Yes, around Suginami area.

11:51:27:02 Because Suginami did not get direct hit, we had a normal life. It was not easy life because we could not do any business, such as restaurant and grocery store.

11:51:47:12 After I finished my compulsory education, I got into jyo-gakkou(girls' school). At jyo-gakkou, there was a system called "gakuto-kinro-douin"(Student Labor Mobilization) and we went out to military factory.

11:52:00:10 And they made 13, 14 years old children make the military weapons, even though it required high skill to make them.

11:52:13:01 So you went back to Tokyo to graduate?

11:52:14:21 Yes, and to go to jyo-gakkou.

11:52:23:11 Did you graduate?

11:52:25:10 Yes, as I said it already, I had graduation ceremony at Tataido-daiyon kokumin-gakkou(Takaido4th elementary school).

11:52:29:14 How was the graduation ceremony like? Was it different from the ceremony before and after the war?

11:52:35:01 Of course, it was different. We no longer had a school building since it got burnt down. The ceremony was held at a burnt-out area and we were all wearing "bouku-zukin"(protection hood) and we carried first aid kit. We were wearing monpe pants as well.

11:52:54:11 We had the ceremony at a burnt-out area. And we used to have a pole for national flag, but that was burnt out too. It was made out of wood; I guess there were huge trees at that time. Also, the table, which the school principal used to pass out the diplomas, had only 3 legs because 1 got burnt.

11:53:18:05 We carried chairs from neighbor school, because our school did not have any. Well, the weather was nice though.

11:53:27:05 The principal made a speech. After the speech, people from "Kokubo-fujinkai"(National Defence Women's Association) passed out "osekihan"(rice cooked together with red beans) to all of us, despite of the fact that we had limited food to eat. I do not know if it was favor of city or nation, but it was special and I strongly remember that.

11:53:50:06 We did not have much to eat at that time, but they passed out osekihan for us. It was just a small amount of osekihan, but still...

11:53:54:09 The song we sang was a military song. We did not sing any standard graduation songs, such as "Aogeba totoshi" or "Hotaruno hikari(Auld Lang Syne)"

11:54:06:03 We sang like.... "Kachinuku bokura shokokumin, tenno-heikano on tameni, sinuyoto oshieta chichi haha no...(we are fighting rising generation. parents told us that they could die for the holy

emperor...)

11:54:18:09 And we sang a song by Empress Kojun. "tugino yowo, seoubeki miwo takumashiku, tadashikunobiyo, satoniutsurite." (grow up and stay strong, young people who carry the future of this country on their shoulders) The graduation ceremony was like that. We did receive the diploma though.

11:54:34:14 The graduation was after the air raid, correct?

11:54:36:22 Yes, the air raid happened in December. Because the school building was made out of wood, it got burnt down easily. On December 3rd, Tokyo got attacked by carrier-borne aircrafts. The big buildings like the school buildings got attacked in the beginning.

11:55:07:18 News report did not tell us the truth about what had happened to our school, so we got the news few days later.

11:55:17:10 The news about Takaido-daiyon kokumin-gakkou got burnt down.

11:55:21:09 When it happened in December, were you evacuated to Miyagi?

11:55:25:03 Yes, I was at Miyagi, so I got news report at Miyagi.

11:55:27:14 The news arrived in Miyagi?

11:55:30:02 Yes, radio news.

11:55:31:23 Besides, there was Children newspaper and our school was on the paper.

11:55:41:11 So I went back to the school without the building. I only know the information which parents and teachers told us. They came from Tokyo to inform us. I do not know the truth.

11:56:04:23 We were out of fuel, so when the school got burnt down, people were desperate about gathering charcoal from school building. That is what I heard from someone. It was very cold weather so people needed them.

11:56:31:21 Did all of the students from Takaido school evacuated to Miyagi?

11:56:26:16 Although the group evacuation was enforced by the government, children from poor family or sickly weak child could not join the group evacuation. Their parents had to pay for them every month.

11:57:00:22 The children needed to be healthy and financially available, so not everyone could evacuate.

11:57:14:22 How many people evacuated?

11:57:16:04 The total of girls was 156.

11:57:18:18 Those people heard the news about....

11:57:22:18 Yes, they heard the news about our school got burnt down.

11:57:23:23 What was the students' reaction about the news.

11:57:25:10 We were told not to be agitated. We were told that Amaterasu-omikami would blow away all of the US airplanes, so do not be agitated. They were angry about the fact we got worried.

11:57:55:14 When you evacuated to Nagano, did you have any fear?

11:56:59:06 There was no fear but very lonely.

11:58:06:03 I did not have friend, I could not make friend.

11:58:14:18 lonely...

11:58:19:14 I could not work as well as country children could, so I had an awful experience from a teacher.

11:58:28:21 It would be a huge problem if same thing happened now.

11:58:37:01 The teacher yelled at me and slapped me in front of other students, so the students thought that it was ok to do the same to me.

11:58:49:23 I was alone everyday.

11:58:56:07 I was looking up the sky... blue sky...
